ED 155 944 IMPLICATIONS FOR WORKING WITH NEW CANADIANS. TEAL OCCASIONAL PAPERS, VOL. 2, 1978.

1 OF 1 MARSHALL, DIANE BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE, VANCOUVER. 78 10P.

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 155 944 FL 009 565

AUTHOR	Marshall, Diane
TITLE	Implications for Working with New Canadians. TEAL Occasional Papers, Vol. 2, 1978.
INSTITUTION	British Columbia Association of Teachers of English as an Additional Language, Vancouver.
PUB DATE	78
NOTE	10p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Maureen C. Sawkins, British Columbia Association of TEAL, c/o King Edward Campus, V.C.C., 2750 Oak St., Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada ($2.50 Canadian plus $.50 postage)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Adult Counseling; Adult Education; Affective Behavior; Chinese Culture; *Counseling Services; Cultural Differences; *Culture Conflict; *English (Second Language); Females; *Immigrants; Junior Colleges; Language Programs; Second Language Learning; Sex Role; Social Influences; Socioeconomic Influences
IDENTIFIERS	*Asian Culture; Asian Immigrants; *British Columbia; Canada

ABSTRACT

General implications for counseling Asian immigrant women were sought through individual and group counseling at King Edward Campus of Vancouver Community College. The campus is the base for the centralized English as a second language program for new Canadian adults in British Columbia. The research focused in part on nine women who were tested and interviewed. Sociological and psychological dynamics that counselors and teachers should understand include the minority group status of the immigrant, difficulties in understanding a new culture, severe economic stress, unfamiliarity with democratic processes, Asian "identity" versus North American "identity" constructs, culturally influenced social relationship patterns and roles of women, and the acceptability of expressing feelings in Asian culture. Nine implications for counseling, which can be extended to the teaching relationship, are presented. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED155944

IMPLICATIONS FOR WORKING WITH NEW CANADIANS

DIANE MARSHALL

Ms Marshall has completed a Masters degree in Counselling Psychology from the University of British Columbia. Now she is doing graduate work in Social Work in Toronto.

For five months during the spring and summer of 1977, I worked at King Edward Campus, Vancouver Community College: the centralized English as a Second Language (E.S.L.) program for new Canadian adults in British Columbia. Through individual and group counselling I attempted to ascertain and identify some general implications for counselling Asian immigrant women. My aim was essentially to seek to see Canadian society through the eyes of the women with whom I worked. Whether Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, or East Indian, all the women expressed -- in addition to a general culture shock and sense of isolation due to language barriers -- the feeling that they "didn't know how to be a Canadian woman". Thus, they faced the double challenge of acculturation and role re-definition -- often in a context of a family situation where husband and/or children were non-supportive and even openly hostile to any re-definition of a traditional woman's role".

My approach to working with the women was to put aside, as far as possible, the value presuppositions of the North American culture, and particularly of a western humanist and individualistic view of the person as expressed by most psychological theorists. While working with concepts such as "self-worth", "personal identity", "loneliness", "emotional growth", and while personally holding very strong convictions with respect to feminism, yet I attempted to see the world through the eyes of the women I counselled, and sought to accept their view of such constructs as the person, women, men, community, marriage, family, and "growth". I felt that to do

FL009565

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Maureen Sawkins

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

otherwise would have constituted another form of cultural imperialism, disguised in the framework of therapy or women's liberation.

Procedures

In part, my research focussed on nine women, who were willing to participate in a series of tests and interviews to help me understand how they were feeling about themselves and their new lives. These nine women came from diverse socio-economic backgrounds; their ages ranged from 18 to 45 years; their marital status varied (two were single, five were married, one was separated, and one divorced): educational backgrounds varied from grade 8 completion to a professional dentist. Five of the women were mothers, all of whose children still lived at home. The average length of time in Canada of the nine women was 2½ years.

The psychological tests used included standardized (Tennessee Self-Concept, Counselling form); and projective (Kinetic Family Drawing, Lifeline, Sentence Completion Blanks); the assumption being that (a) the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale would provide insight into the whole area of "self-concept", and that (b) drawings would be a culture-free and relaxed, non-threatening form of symbolization and self-expression. All tests were used in conjunction with personal interviews, and subsequent group work. (In addition to individual counselling, I ran a weekly group of women which included some of the nine mentioned above.)

While it is difficult to make generalizations from a limited sample, yet I have attempted to discover basic principles which may be incorporated into a counselling style or approach when working with immigrant women. An additional caution is called for here: although recognizing that there

are distinct cultural differences among the various Asian ethnic groups, the purpose of the study was to find the common needs and difficulties experienced by the women and not to focus or identify their separate cultural factors.

Discussion

There are many dynamics of which a counsellor or teacher must be aware when working with immigrants, both on broad sociological and psychological levels. I will seek to delineate several of these dynamics, and then summarize some specific implications for working with immigrant Asian women.

Sociological Factors

a) Have an awareness that immigrants experience minority group status (including language difficulties, problems of job certification, cultural shock, and absence of group support systems).

b) Be aware of an immigrant's difficulties in understanding a new culture and feeling comfortable with a new environment. The burden of change rests with the new Canadian; and such rapid and extensive acculturation often results in role loss, and a sense of normlessness or anomie. This condition is heightened if the immigrant should happen to be from a pre- or low industrialized nation, or from a rural background. For many immigrants, the rate of change and pace of life is at once frightening and overwhelming, shaking the roots of family solidarity, and this fact need be kept uppermost in mind by the counsellor or teacher.

c) Severe economic stress is faced by most immigrants. In addition to the economic pressure of actually moving to a new country and establishing a new home here, there may be added responsibilities and financial obligations to relatives still in the person's country of origin. Thus

economic needs must be taken seriously in seeking to understand the kinds of pressures and tensions experienced by immigrants.

d) Many immigrants are unfamiliar with democratic processes and all the varied social structures of our Canadian society (eg. the school system), having known strongly heirarchical religious and political structures in their countries of origin. An astute teacher or counsellor may be involved in part as an interpreter of the host culture, dealing with such matters as legal problems, social work issues, and educational and health services.

e) "Visible" minorities are increasingly being subjected to racial slurs and discimination in several Canadian centers. Thus, many new Canadians are hurt and disillusioned, and often angered but unable to express it, at the treatment they receive from fellow citizens (eg. one woman described walking along Main Street in Vancouver with her mother, after being in Canada only three months, and being accosted by a white stranger who told them "You are in Canada now, so please don't speak Chinese"!!). Such humiliation and hurt does much to undermine self-confidence and self-respect, and is an important factor to remember when working with immigrants.

Psychological Factors

a) "Identity". In counselling immigrants, especially Asian immigrant women, it is important to understand the fundamental construct of "identity". Asian "identity" is intrinsically group oriented, and specifically familial. In contrast, North American society is individualistic and so "identity" is highly personal or individual. The Asian group-orientedness could be called a diffused identity, where the "self" is overextended and highly communal, particularly with reference to the extended family.

The Canadian, in comparison, typically experiences a high degree of individualization, resulting often in a lack of a sense of community and feelings of isolation as a consequence.

While religious philosophy was beyond the scope of the study, it is to be acknowledged that world-and-life views do serve to mould a cultural view of the person. It is essential for anyone involved in immigrant counselling to be sensitive to the fact that an Asian view of "self" cannot be divorced from all of life -- nature, society, and family. To be a "person" in Oriental society means something very different from the Maslowian "self-actualized" individual, and thus individualization as we know it is very uncommon. For an Asian, the functioning of the whole social fabric is part of the "good"; consequently, manners and social protocol are considered very important. One can then understand how North American expressions such as "if you want", "it's up to you", "do your own thing", "that's your problem", etc. are completely foreign to the average Asian person!

b) Social relationships: the strong sense of family identity in Asian culture leads to a sense of respect and honour towards one's elders and ancestors, and a sense of one's personal history in terms of one's family history. This profoundly affects many social relationships, most particularly the care of the aged and the patterns of child rearing. "Respect" as the main value in social relations is revealed in ways of speaking, certain behaviours and customs, proper appearances: the whole scope of traditions and manners, and in a strong emphasis on hospitality.

c) Role of women: Asian societies tend to be patriarchal and authoritarian: the role of women is by and large fairly subservient. From the women I counselled, it became clear -- whether they be East Indian, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, or Vietnamese - that the social norm for women was that of marriage and motherhood. To fail to accomplish this was akin

to failure and a sign of weakness or inferiority. Hard working, never showing anger or jealousy, the "ideal" Oriental woman as pictured by the women with whom I worked, was "asexual" and "demure". In denying her own feelings, she therefore also denies expression of her own talents and gifts as a person. One woman, who had achieved professional status as a dentist, felt that such accomplishment was only at great cost to her sense of self-worth, and a contributing factor in her two divorces. In her own eyes, she is a "failure as a woman". Thus, in counselling Asian women, this idea of virtuous womanhood must be kept in mind, since it is so intermeshed with self-concept. Further, profound role loss and disintegration can occur when a woman is confronted, in an alien society, such as Canada, with a challenge to her role as wife and mother.

d) Expression of feelings: the women all expressed that revealing one's feelings is foreign to the social norm of respect and politeness in Asian culture. Yet, they were openly fascinated with the "way of being" of Canadian social relationships, which they saw as being connected with a freedom for self-expression. They viewed relationships in this country as being more "personal", not based solely on status and respect, or on duty; and the main ingredient characterizing this freedom in their view is that of direct expression of one's feelings. In comparison, they described the Asian way of being as indirect and subtle, necessitating a sensing of another's feelings. For example, anger is masked because it is considered impolite to infringe it on another, thereby causing humiliation. However, it is somehow expected that if one is angry then it should be sensed by the other person concerned.

It would seem that hurt, anger, and negative feelings are the most severely masked, because of the desire for social

pleasantness. So, rather than being considered "dishonest", it is an honourable thing to mask strong feelings, and not impose them on another person. But according to the women with whom I worked, this communication style often causes severe problems in a marriage relationship, as well as in child rearing, and perhaps also in an educational setting. Thus it is clear that a major cultural difference -- and one with deep significance for any counsellor or teacher -- exists in the whole area of expressiveness. Such a difference can profoundly affect one's goals for the counselling process, or in the style of one's teaching.

Implications for Counselling

The aforegoing synopsis of sociological and psychological factors operant in intercultural counselling, leads one to some tentative conclusions and implications for the counselling relationship which can be extended to the teaching relationship as well. These are, in brief, as follows:

1. A counsellor/teacher must be aware of his/her own belief system and cultural biases. The lack of such self-awareness prevents the counsellor from permeating the cultural boundaries between one's self and one's client(s).

2. The counsellor/teacher must never lose sight of the fact that each client is unique, and not simply a stereotype. Thus, an Asian woman must not be seen merely as an "Asian", or as a "woman", but as a unique person.

3. Language must be descriptive, and not complex.

4. Humour must be used discreetly, remembering that when there are language barriers, humour can be misunderstood.

5. The counsellor/teacher must be prepared to be a cultural "interpreter", to help clarify or define certain

mechanics of how to function in Canadian society. Frequently the native culture's proscriptions against women pursuing any kind of education -- including English language training -- will need to be faced.

6. Further exploration of the field of vocational counselling and testing is needed; this should be seen in light of an understanding of an Asian woman's sense of "self" and her need for individualization in a Canadian social context. The idea of a woman having a vocation as such may be offensive to an Asian male-dominated heirarchical subculture.

7. The counsellor/teacher must be prepared to facilitate a more differentiated and individuated "self", when working with Asian women. The need to grow out of the fused identity and family kinship ties, and to develop a sense of "personal" identity seems imperative to survival in North American society, and is certainly a main goal of the counselling relationship. One must, however, seek to maintain a sense of <u>interdependence</u>, where a sense of community and connectedness to others (without being fused to them) is preserved.

8. The expression of feelings must be approached with sensitivity and respect.

9. Recognition of, and focussing on the needs of the woman will often result in her awareness of feelings of powerlessness and worthlessness. Through a sharing of this realization in a fairly <u>egalitarian</u> group or relationship, where the counsellor/teacher does not present herself as an authority figure, each woman can then grow at her own rate and according to her own needs, the effect being -- without any rhetoric -- that of liberation. Thus, the pain of subservience is being healed.

The experience of working with Asian immigrant women proved an invaluable and deeply enriching time. We learned together about openness, about cultural barriers, about certain ideas of manners and expected social roles in Canadian society. I gained a great respect for the courage and strength of these women for coping and adapting to new life experiences under tremendous stresses. The field of intercultural counselling is only beginning, and there is much yet to be understood.

Certainly it would seem that the extension of many of these principles would do well to be applied to teachers of new Canadians. There are very definite implications for how the teacher could structure the classroom learning experience -- eg. facing the issues of authority and heirarchy by creating a more open, democratic mode of instruction. The E. S. L. teacher acts in many situations as one of the primary contacts with Canadian society. A sensitive understanding of the needs of the immigrant student learning English is imperative if the socialization process of these new citizens is to be facilitated.